

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the paragraph on page 12, starting on line 19 and ending on line 32 with the following amended paragraph:

If the CT\_IU is not secured, processing proceeds using conventional Fibre Channel rules. If the CT\_IU is secured, an identifier such as a security association identifier is referenced against a security database such as a security association database at 505. Key information and algorithm information are extracted from the entry containing the identifier or security association identifier associated with the received Common Transport Information Unit. If the CT\_IU is authentication secured, processing proceeds as a conventional CT\_Authentication protocol: the authentication data is computed at 507 using key information, algorithm information, and encrypted data as noted in the security database. The authentication data computed is then compared at 509 with the authentication hash block data contained in the CT\_IU. If the authentication hash block data matches, the identity of the sender is verified. Otherwise the Common Transport Information Unit is not authenticated and discarded. If the CT\_IU is not authentication secured, the authentication processing described above is skipped.